

Law Degree. He served with the Archdiocese Metropolitan Tribunal for twenty years and for two years as a judicial vicar. Bishop Abramowicz's first appointment was associate pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in South Chicago from June 19th, 1943 to July 7th, 1948. He was named Auxiliary Bishop on May 2nd, 1968 and appointed pastor of Five Holy Martyrs Parish on July 14, 1968 and served until January of 1990.

Bishop Abramowicz's involvement in the community was far-reaching. In 1969 he served as national chairman for the U.S. visit of His Eminence Karol Cardinal Wojtyla of Krakow, Poland and was fundamental in planning the second visit of that same friend, Pope John Paul II to Chicago in 1979.

Mr. Speaker, Bishop Abramowicz's strong dedication to the Catholic church and to his community as a whole will be sorely missed. I am certain that his legacy will live on in the community for many years to come.

TRIBUTE TO JOSE AGUIAR

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 6, 1999

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a young and successful entrepreneur from my congressional district, Mr. Jose Aguiar. Through his dedication, discipline, and success in small business, Mr. Aguiar can serve as a role model for millions of youngsters in the United States who dream of succeeding, like him, in the world of business.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute and wishing continued success to Mr. Jose Aguiar.

The following article, which appeared in the October 4, New York Daily News, describes Mr. Aguiar's career in more detail.

DRY CLEANER'S KEEN TO EXPAND

Dry cleaning is Jose Aguiar's business, but cleaning up is his goal.

The 37-year-old president of Kleener King, a chain of dry cleaning stores in the metro area, is poised to expand by opening a central facility that will handle all the cleaning from his growing number of stores.

"I'm at the cusp," the Bronx businessman said, adding that he will use a \$6.1 million loan from the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corp., and the Empire State Development Corp. to help spur his company's growth.

Growing from a small outfit to a chain of 20 in his native Bronx and in upper Manhattan didn't happen overnight.

In 1982, Aguiar dropped out after two years at Columbia University—where he was majoring in economics—to run his parents' business with his mother, Carmen, after his father, Jose Sr., became ill.

He held on to his parents' original location, Joe's Cleaners on Creston Avenue in the South Bronx, but soon sold the branch on University Avenue about a mile away.

"I didn't know how to manage one store, let alone two," he recalled.

After several years of working as a spotter—the person who pretreats all the stains—he started getting scared about his career prospects.

"I felt I had no future," he said, especially since some of his former Columbia classmates were moving on to plum positions in the business world.

A turning point came in the mid-1980s, when Aguiar went to an industry trade show.

"It opened his eyes and created a big appetite," said David Lewin, the owner of Ipso of New York, a dry cleaning equipment company. Over time, Lewin became a mentor as well as an investor in Aguiar's business.

"It all starts with one store," Aguiar recalled thinking.

He prepared a business plan and set about securing loans to fund an expansion, but scores of sources turned him down.

"They said, 'Grow it to a \$10 million company first' or 'Dry cleaning is not interesting,'" he said. "But I don't give up that easily."

After rounds of talks, he secured millions in a combined loan from several economic development groups in Manhattan and the Bronx for the centerpiece of his strategy—a \$2.5 million centralized cleaning plant, which he persuaded the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and city economic development agencies to jointly sponsor because he promised to create jobs.

The plant, in the Bathgate Industrial Park, will employ more than 100 Kleener King workers at peak operation.

As his company grows, Aguiar credits his parents for his perseverance. The couple moved to New York from Puerto Rico in the early 1950s, and opened Joe's Cleaners in 1956 with \$5,000 in seed money.

His father insisted he work every Saturday starting at 6 a.m. and after school, except when he played for softball and football teams.

Aguiar said some of his earliest memories were in the store. "I was a dry cleaning baby," he said, recalling photos of him sitting on a dryer or atop a clothes bin.

Thirty-five years after his parents' start, Aguiar was crafting his plans for Kleener King.

In the early days, the company was pulling in about \$250,000 in revenues. This year, that jumped to about \$2 million, and he hopes it could grow to about \$10 million in four years.

Working seven days a week at the business has been his routine since his mother died in 1993. Unmarried and without much family in New York, he works well into the evening before trekking home to Bayside, Queens.

"Kleener King is my life," said Aguiar, who for the past three years has been a guest speaker at Columbia University on entrepreneurship and who vows to attend business school one day.

In hopes of pursuing that dream, he's trying to get credit for his professional experiences to help achieve the equivalent of an undergraduate degree.

"I've learned a lot on my own," Aguiar said.

HONORING BEN DIGREGORIO

HON. ELIOT L. ENGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 6, 1999

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, Ben DiGregorio is that rare individual, someone who has devoted his life to the service of his country, his city and his community. He came to the Bronx when he was a year old and has lived here

ever since. He joined the Navy as a young man and when he was discharged, joined the New York City Police Department. He has a marvelous 34 year career and was named the first commanding officer of the 49th Precinct when it opened in 1985. He retired three years later but was not finished.

Captain DiGregorio was elected to Community School Board 11 and he has served in that capacity for 11 years. But he not only served on the Board but would go to schools to give career counseling and read to the students. He was honored by the Forum of Italian American Educators with their Community Service Award for his work on the School Board.

Ben and his wife Virginia have a daughter, Donna, and two sons, Steven and David. He is retiring from Community School Board and I want to join his friends and colleagues in wishing him and his family all the good that life has to offer. He has certainly earned it.

NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH

HON. JERRY MORAN

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 6, 1999

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure today that I rise to join my colleagues in supporting National Co-op Month. Across Kansas and across the country, cooperatives form the economic backbone of many communities. Co-ops provide power, purchase the agriculture products, add value to the farmer and rancher, and allow individuals to join together in their local communities.

Across the country, over 70 million people belong to some type of cooperative. Since Ben Franklin formed the first co-op in 1752, co-ops have operated with three basic principles: user ownership, user control, and user benefits. It is with those three principles that individuals can work together to add value and compete in a world where mergers and concentration are often the stories of the day.

In Kansas, farmers and ranchers have joined in innovative cooperative projects aimed at moving them from being producers, to being processors and providers of wholesome food products in the grocery store. Kansas' 21st Century Alliance has taken risks to move farmers into grain processing, beef processing, high-volume dairying, and even dry-edible bean processing. All of these ventures have been cooperatives, allowing producers ownership, control, and, hopefully, the benefits.

The challenge for Congress is to support and encourage more opportunities for farmers and ranchers to add value and gain a greater portion of the food dollar. Cooperatives provide that opportunity, and I look forward to pursuing new ways to assist cooperatives as they grow and advance on behalf of their member-owners.

Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues in congratulating cooperatives on their first century and a half, and wish cooperatives success in these and other ventures for the next century.